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**Selected Lexical Differences Between British and
American English: A Corpus-Supported View**

**Vybrané lexikální rozdíly mezi britskou a
americkou angličtinou: korpusově-založená
studie**

B.A. Thesis

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V dne..... podpis.....

Abstrakt

Bakalářská práce se zabývá lexikálními rozdíly mezi britskou a americkou angličtinou a postupným lexikálním sblížováním těchto dvou jazykových variet. Hlavní těžiště práce spočívá v ověření a dokumentaci přechodu lexikálních jednotek z americké do britské jazykové variety za pomoci korpusových metod. Teoretická část se věnuje studiu lexikálních rozdílů mezi těmito varietami angličtiny a procesu přejímání slov. V této části jsou také popsány korpusové metody využívané v praktické části. Metodologická část popisuje korpusy použité ve výzkumu. Praktická část obsahuje poznatky získané za použití korpusových metod popsaných v teoretické části.

Klíčová slova: korpusově založené metody typu „corpus-based“ a „corpus-driven“, lexikální konvergence, amerikanismy

The bachelor thesis identifies the lexical differences between British and American English and examines the continuing lexical convergence between the two varieties. The main focus of the work is the verification and documentation of the transfer of lexical units from American to British language variety using corpus-supported methods. The theoretical part is devoted to the study of lexical differences between the two language varieties and the process of language change. The corpus-supported approaches applied in the practical part are also identified here. The corpora used in the research are described in the chapter headed *Material and Methods*. The practical part, comprises findings gained using the corpus-supported methods described in the theoretical part.

Keywords: corpus-based approach, corpus-driven approach, lexical convergence, americanisms

List of Abbreviations

AmE = American English

AmE06 = American English 2006 Corpus

BBC = British Broadcasting Corporation

BE06 = British English 2006 Corpus

BNC = British National Corpus

BrE = British English

COCA = Corpus of Contemporary American English

MI-score = Mutual Information Score

OALD = Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

OED = Oxford English Dictionary

UK = United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

US = United States

USA = United States of America

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1. Introduction

Continuing lexical convergence between British and American English is considered to be a well-known fact. This thesis focuses on discovering methods how to explicitly verify and document the convergence between the two varieties. There are two aspects to my thesis: the description of the lexical differences and testing in practice the methodology applicable in a corpus-supported study of variations between two language varieties.

Because my thesis focuses on two aspects, the theoretical part necessarily has to comprise two sections. The first section gives an insight on the existing lexical similarities and differences, as well as on the fields of language with higher occurrence of lexical variations. The mechanism of language change is described in order to explain the continuing development towards lexical convergence. Assuming a historical perspective, forces leading to lexical change are identified. The second section explores the two basic methods used in a corpus supported-study.

The third chapter, headed *Material and Methods*, explains what corpora were used in the research and justifies the assignment of the methods to the pairs of corpora.

The research in the fourth chapter is partly concerned with the utilization of the corpus-driven method in comparison of keyword lists, and partly with the employment of the corpus-based method in the research of shifts in the meanings of lexical units whose form is identical in both of the varieties but where there is an additional meaning in the American English or a difference in connotation or distribution. Using the methods and corpora described in Chapter 3, the fourth chapter introduces the procedures used in the research

and displays the finding of the two methods concluded by the evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches in corpus-supported study.

The appendices to this thesis include the data analysed in the research.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 British and American English

2.1.1 Lexical Similarities and Differences between American and British English

According to Glenn Darragh, there are only around 4,000 fairly frequent words in British English that either do not occur in American English at all, or are used in a different way (Darragh, 2000: v). In comparison to the latest edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, which contains over 350 000 words, phrases and meanings (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2010), this number seems insignificant. Taking into account how relatively few lexical differences there are between American and British English, the emphasis on the differences seems rather exaggerated. In most situations, The British, especially, appear to be particularly conscious of the differences. Yet here we have to take into account the fact that, in case of English, the regional varieties also define national identity. Nowadays the American regional variety holds a strong influence over the English spoken anywhere else in the world. But it is especially the people of the UK, but also the inhabitants of New Zealand, Australia, Canada and South Africa, who feel most threatened by this development. For them, American English posts a threat to a defining aspect of their nationality (Crystal, 2003: 127 – 128). Having accentuated the importance of pointing to the lexical specificities of regional varieties I would like to proceed by looking at the types of lexical differences and similarities between British and American English in general.

2.1.1.1 Types of vocabulary

In order to compare the word-stock of the two varieties I will start by looking at the types of vocabulary. The classification of vocabulary as used by Strevens (1972: 54 – 63) seems most

apt for my purposes. Taking into account both the form and the meaning he divides English word-stock into three categories.

2.1.1.1.1 The Common Word-Stock

This category comprises words where both the form and the meaning correspond in both varieties. Typical representatives include words like *man, woman, fish, sky, tree, day, week...*

This type of vocabulary represents a majority of English lexis (Strevens, 1972: 54) and does not allow distinguishing the regional variety. Since my thesis is oriented at lexical differences, I shall not concern myself with this category.

2.1.1.1.2 Common Ideas, Different Words

This category includes words that have a synonymous counterpart in the other regional variety; one idea is expressed by different words in the two dialects of English. Typical examples are various items of clothing, such as, (in the order of BrE – AmE) *waistcoat – vest, trousers – pants, pants – underpants* and car terms: *petrol – gas (gasoline), boot – trunk, bonnet – hood, bumper – fender*. However, due to the socio-cultural differences between the two varieties, these expressions are not always fully synonymous. Let us take the example of the British word *motorway* (Strevens, 1972: 55 – 56). According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010: 996), *motorway* can be defined as “a wide road, with at least two lanes in each direction, where traffic can travel fast for long distances between large towns”. The dictionary delimits the use to Britain but does not give us the American synonym, the reason being the fact that there is no synonym of the word *motorway* as such, there are only a number of near-synonyms. The dictionary leads us to compare *motorway*

with *interstate*. *Interstate* is depicted as “a wide road, with minimum of two lanes in each direction, where traffic can travel fast for long distances across many states” (ibid.: 814). *Expressway* is another near-synonym. Its use is restricted to “cit(ies) or other area(s) where many people live” (ibid.: 538). For British English such a restricted term would be redundant taking into consideration that there are only 66 cities in the UK¹. Other American expressions include *freeway* which is defined as a motorway where there is no need to pay tolls². For driving on a *turnpike*, on the other hand, we will be charged (OALD, 2010: 1652). *Parkway* is a motorway lined with trees and grass (ibid.: 1102), *thruway* is a term for a freeway occurring in some official freeway names (ibid.: 1602).

A study of lexical differences necessarily involves a study of cultural differences. A majority of lexical mismatches between the two varieties can be explained on cultural ground (Stevens, 1972: 58). There are many cultural distinctions mirrored for example in the vocabulary of law, politics and education. Semantically, these examples hold a middle ground between this category and the category which follows.

2.1.1.1.3 Words with no Counterparts

The third category comprises words that do not have a counterpart in the other regional variety. Typical examples are words for various features from the fields of geography, fauna and flora peculiar only to one of the countries. Other culture specific vocabulary could be found in the realm of sports and games (Stevens, 1972: 59), national meals and traditions. In the above category (2.1.1.1.2), cultural differences accounted for the existence of near-synonyms which better corresponded to the situation in the other culture. The signified

¹ UK Cities <http://www.ukcities.co.uk/> accessed 27th December 2012.

² *The Free Dictionary* <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/freeway> accessed 27th December 2012.

occurs in the other country as well, although it might exist in a slightly altered form. On the other hand, in this category (2.1.1.1.3), non-existence of the word, or its synonymous expression, in the other variety of English is caused by the absence of the signified object/idea in the other culture. Both, the signified and the signifier are unique only for one of the cultures.

2.1.1.1.4 Same Word, Difference in Meaning and/or Use

Trudgill and Hannah (1997: 89) describe another area of lexical differences between BrE and AmE not included in Strevens' classification, where the same word has a different meaning or connotations in each variety. The following subcategories summarise the types of lexical differences within this category.

➤ Same Word, Different Meaning

This subcategory includes words where one signifier stands for two different signifieds in the two different varieties. Because speakers of the two English varieties understand the words in this subcategory differently, misunderstandings may occur. The adjective *homely*, for instance, has the meaning of "down to earth" in British English, while in American English the word means "ugly" (Trudgill and Hannah, 1997: 89).

➤ Same Word, additional meaning in one variety

This second subcategory comprises words whose one meaning is known in both varieties. Yet these words also have a second, additional meaning in one of the Englishes. Oftentimes,

this additional meaning is a metaphorical extension of the meaning shared by the two varieties (Trudgill and Hannah, 1997: 89). Examples of words with an additional meaning in American English include *dumb* (additional meaning “stupid”) or *cute* (“attractive, charming”). The words *smart* (“well-groomed”) and *surgery* (“an office of any doctor”) have additional meanings in British English (Trudgill and Hannah, 1997: 89 – 90).

➤ Same Word, Difference in Style, Connotation, Frequency of Use

Differences in style, connotation or frequency of use are nuances typical of one or the other variety that mostly do not form an impediment to understanding. The following words differ in either of these. The word *clever* is rather common in British English and has a positive connotation; in American English, on the other hand, it is much scarcer and mostly negative. The word *fortnight* is common in British English, but rather archaic in American (Trudgill and Hannah, 1997: 90 – 91).

2.1.2 Fields of Vocabulary with a High Occurrence of Differences between the Two

Varieties

2.1.2.1 Natural and Geographical Features

This thematic group arises from the different natural environments of the two countries. On arriving to the New World, the colonists encountered animal species and plants previously unknown to them, as well as unfamiliar geographical features. Not being able to provide names for these, the colonists had to look elsewhere for inspiration. Often terms from Native Indian languages were adopted. These adoptions include words such as *chipmunk*, *hickory*, *moose*, *howl*, *skunk*, *tomahawk*, *totem*, *wigwam* and many others (Crystal, 2002: 247). Adoptions from other languages also added to this field of American vocabulary. Words like *canyon*, *coyote*, *lasso*, *mustang* and *tornado* are originally of Spanish origin, *caribou* and *prairie* came from French (Crystal, 2002: 247). Another source of new vocabulary for the colonists was their own imagination. If no suitable name was available, they invented their own original term. These newly coined terms include words such as *mockingbird*, *rattlesnake* and *eggplant*. Sometimes they used terms that were part of the language already, as in case of the terms for different fauna and flora typical of Britain. Many of these would have otherwise remained unused for not all the fauna and flora of Britain could be found in the New World as well (Marckwardt and Quirk, 1965: 26). Among the words whose meanings shifted are expressions such as *robin* (in Britain it is a small songbird with an orange-red face and breast, whereas in North America this term applies to a large thrush with red breast and dark head³), and *corn* (in Britain it is a term that applies “collectively to the cereal plants while growing, or, while still containing the grain” while the

³ OED <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/166614?rskey=qLhZkz&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> accessed 27th December 2012.

US term relates “both to the separated seeds, and to the growing or reaped crop” of maize⁴) (Marckwardt and Quirk, 1965: 26). Nowadays most of these words do not have a counterpart in British English, or the meanings differ. In case of the word *eggplant*, British English adopted the originally French term *aubergine*⁵.

2.1.2.2 Social and Political Institutions

Different political systems necessarily require different terminology. With the USA being a federal republic, we come across terms such as *congress*, *Senate*, *House of Representatives*, *Constitution* and *President*. In British political terms we encounter terms such as *Parliament*, *House of Lords*, *House of Commons*, *Prime Minister*, *the Queen* and *the Prince Consort*.

In case of legal systems of the two countries, there is a higher ratio of similarities. Some of the terms, such as *court*, *judge*, *evidence*, *witness*, *verdict*, *conviction* and *sentence* are common in both of the Englishes. The British term *magistrate*, that is “an official who acts as a judge in the lowest courts of law” (OALD, 2010: 925), has its counterpart in the American term *Justice of Peace*. But both systems also have their peculiarities. While in the US court it would be *a lawyer* who would act in one’s behalf, in Britain one would have to hire *a barrister* in case of criminal cases, or *a solicitor* who deals with cases not criminal in nature (Strevens, 1972: 58 – 59).

Because education in Britain and in the USA is also organised differently, we can come across lexical differences. The most basic term of this field, *school*, is used in both of the countries but the meanings of the term are not a perfect match. While in Britain it would be children

⁴ both OED <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/41586?rskey=C8vE76&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid> accessed 27th December 2012.

⁵ OED <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/12985#eid34119970> accessed 27th December 2012.

who attend school, the American term encompasses also places of higher education such as universities. When deciding which type of school to send their children to, American parents have a choice of either *public* or *private school*. As the name suggests, *public school* is an establishment open to children from all social classes for the education is paid for by the government. *Private school*, on the other hand, is mostly closed for children from poorer background. The education there is not sponsored by the government so the parents have to pay for the schooling. In Britain, *public school* is also a familiar term, but it applies to a school where parents have to pay for the education of their children (Stevens, 1972: 57).⁶ In today's Britain, *public schools* are contrasted by *state schools*, where, just like in American *public schools*, there is no need to pay for the tuition because it is paid for by the government. I shall not even attempt to compare the terms of compulsory education for Britain has not got a unified system and therefore the terms vary depending on what school we are talking about. Optional education starts with *high school* in the USA and with *college* or *sixth form* in Britain. An American *student* finishes his *high school* by *graduating* from it. In Britain teenagers who attend *college* or *sixth form* are called *pupils*; the term *student* is reserved for attendants of a *university* only (Stevens, 1972: 57). One of the requirements to being accepted to *university* in Britain is passing *the A-levels* which conclude secondary education. In the USA, the term *university* is also used in the same meaning, although more often this applies to a place where students gain more advanced knowledge after finishing their first degree at *college* (OALD, 2010: 293).

⁶ While in today's English, this term might cause much confusion, it has a perfectly understandable reason from the past. According to Marckwardt and Quirk (1965: 28), *public schools* were schools built for the money provided by fund-raising campaigns. At that time these were charitable organization that provided free schooling. These were contrasted by private schools where the tuition was not free of charge. Over time, *public schools* became very prestigious institutions. And with prestige necessarily came the need to pay for education. So by the time of the arrival of the contemporary educational system, the name *public school* was too closely associated with this prestigious schooling to change it.

Sport plays a major social role in the lives of most British people. That might be one of the reasons why Marckwardt and Quirk (1965: 28.) also included sports terminology into the category of social institutions. While most sports like football or basketball are popular and played worldwide, other sports are culture specific. Sports such as rugby or cricket are rarely played in the USA but are very popular in Britain and its former colonies. Fundamentally similar sports are played in the USA, namely American football and baseball, but the terminology differs enormously. Terms from the British game of cricket such as *wicket* (“1 either of the two sets of three vertical sticks with pieces of wood lying across the top [which] the bowler tries to hit with the ball, 2 the area of ground between the two wickets”) (OALD, 2010: 1744) and *bowler* (“a person who bowls (‘throws the ball to the batsman’)”) (OALD, 2010: 174) would most likely confuse an American but in Britain they are widely known (Stevens, 1972: 59). *Wicket* is such a well-known term in British English that is applied metaphorically as well. *Sticky wicket*, as Marckwardt and Quirk (1965: 28) claim, means a difficult situation and comes from its sense in cricket where it describes a pitch particularly difficult to play on because of the effects of weather on it. For most Americans terms such as *pitcher* (“the person who throws the ball to the batter”) (OALD, 2010: 1146) or *doubleheader* (“two games played on the same day”) (OALD, 2010: 457) would come across as totally intelligible, but most British people would be at a loss as regards their meaning (Stevens, 1972: 59). Also some of the baseball terms entered metaphorical language. *Getting to the first base* is nowadays known on both sides of the Atlantic but it originated in the game of baseball where *first base* is “[the first] of the four positions that a player must reach in order to score points” (OALD, 2010: 112). *To get to the first base* in its metaphorical sense means to get to the first important stage of getting what we wish to gain (Marckwardt and Quirk, 1965: 27 – 28).

2.1.2.3 Housing

Housing is another large group of words where we find roughly similar ideas often known under different terms across the ocean. City dwellers do not live in *blocks of flats* as people in Britain do, but in *apartment buildings*. When talking about their home in these buildings, the British use the term *flat*, whereas for Americans it is always an *apartment*. Another popular building in both of the countries is the British *terraced house* and American *row house*. Externally, these two buildings differ with British *terraced houses* being traditionally lower, therefore designed only for one family to dwell behind each main entrance to the building and often built from red bricks, but in its essence the idea of a building where the individual houses share one or two walls with their neighbour is retained. Buildings where two houses share one wall under one roof are called *semi-detached houses* in British and *duplex* in American. Typically, American *ranch house* also has a near counterpart in the British *bungalow*; both are buildings with only a *ground floor* (or a *first floor* in America), both are rather wide but not very deep. A British person ignorant of the differences in counting floors might then assume that American ranch houses are a floor higher for the British start counting with *ground floor* followed by *first floor*. For Americans, British *ground floor* is their *first floor*, *first floor* is therefore called *second floor* and so on. American *yards* correspond to British *gardens*; both are grassy areas at the back of the building. British *yard*, on the other hand, often has a paved surface and tends to be surrounded by a wall (OALD, 2010: R16 – R17).

There is not much correspondence in the terms for various interior equipment and rooms either. The British cook on *the hob*, store their food in a *larder*, keep their cups and plates in

a cupboard, whereas in the US we would be more likely to come into contact with *burner*, *pantry* and *closet*.

2.1.2.4 Food and Drinks

Traditional British and American cuisine is shaped by local ingredients and popular taste. Therefore, the terms for traditional British dishes are often not familiar to American English speakers, especially as they frequently wield names that do not communicate much as to the nature of the meal they designate. Some of the most popular dishes are *bangers and mash*, *bubble and squeak*, *faggots*, *fish and chips*, *Yorkshire pudding*, *shepherds pie* and *cottage pie* and nowadays also *chicken tikka*. Among dessert, some of the favourites are *scones*, *mince pies* and *spotted dick*. On the other hand, American meal terms mostly do not pose a threat of misunderstanding. Nation's favourite dessert is undeniably *apple pie*, as regards main courses, *hot dog*, *pizza* and *fried chicken* would be identified as typically American.

As well as dining out, shopping for food might be rather confusing for an American in Britain for many completely identical items of food carry a different name. The following list is just a fraction of the differences with British names followed by their American counterpart. *Jam* – *jelly*, *jelly* – *Jell-O*, *crisps* – *chips*, *chips* – *French fries*, *mince* – *ground meat*, *prawn* – *shrimp*, *gherkin* – *pickle*, *semolina* – *cream of wheat*,...

2.1.2.5 Technology

As regard technological terms, British and American English mostly correspond to each other. But there are also some differences. Let us take the British term *hoover*. In the US, this is an unknown term because it comes from the name of a popular British brand of vacuum cleaners. In case of new inventions, in most cases the same name is used in both varieties, e.g. *Blackberry, iPhone, iPad,...* An exception would be the word *mobile phone* which in American English is called *cell phone*.

The field of transport is notable for many lexical differences. In Britain we may hear the terms *car, lorry, cab* or *tram* but in American English these are called *automobile, truck, taxi and streetcar*. Car parts cause even more confusion. Marckwardt and Quirk (1965: 30) explain this by the fact that car as a new invention hit both countries at the same time. Thus people in both countries invented their own terms for various car parts which came into use independently of their synonyms in the other variety of the language. To name just a few differences (British English followed by American English): *windscreen – windshield, wing mirror – side-view mirror, gear level – gear shift, boot – trunk, bonnet – hood, exhaust – tailpipe*. As well as having different names for car parts, there are a few differences in the terms for various types of car. In Britain we drive *saloon, estate car* and *a people carrier*, whereas in the US it would be *sedan, station wagon* and *a minivan* (OALD, 2010: R1).

2.1.2.6 Clothes and Accessories

In comparison to other categories which have been mentioned, the category of clothes and accessories is rather small. The ratio of differences, however, is one of the highest. Especially confusing are those items of clothing where the synonymous expression occurring in the

other variety also exists in the first variety but applies to a different signified. These include (BrE – AmE): *vest – undershirt, waistcoat – vest, trousers – pants, pants – underpants, braces – suspenders, suspenders – garters*. Then there is a group of clothes terms where each of the terms is used in only one of the two countries: *jumper – sweater, polo neck – turtle neck, dressing gown – bath robe* (OALD, 2010: R14, - R15). As regards accessories, there are also quite a few confusing terms. These include especially the British term *handbag* and its American counterpart *purse* because in British English the meaning of *purse* is that of “a small bag [...] for carrying coins, and often also paper money, cards etc., used especially by women” (OALD 2010: 1226). Its counterpart in American English would be *a change purse*. Another example would be the British term *bum bag* which is opposed by the American term *fanny pack*.

2.1.3 British English and Language Change

All of the above categories are open to language change. The various categories will adopt new members and will do away with others. The general trend is that of British English drawing lexically closer to American English.

2.1.3.1 Language Change

Language change has long been associated with decay and deterioration (Crystal, 1997: 4). For most British people language change has been associated with what is often seen as the deteriorating influence of American English on their language variety. Yet most people who condemn language change build their argument on false grounds. The linguists of the eighteenth century were also convinced that language should not change and therefore

attempted to shape it to what they considered perfection and preserve it in that form. They were unsuccessful because they failed to understand how languages work. In fact, every living language is susceptible to changes because it mirrors transformations of society of its users.⁷ The speed of language change varies depending on the development of society, yet it could be said that language change in civilized world had accelerated in the past century. Most inhabitants of civilized countries can see this daily in conversation with the older generation. (Crystal, 1997: 5)

2.1.3.2 Historical Language Changes from the American-British Perspective

The diversification of English into the British and American variety is an example of a language change triggered by a transformation of society. Having arrived to a new continent, the colonists had to adapt language to suit their new living conditions. At this stage, despite the already existing changes, British English still continued to exert strong influence over American English. With the colony being still in the bud, Britain was looked up to as a paradigm. Yet with gaining independence this current of influence ceased to work. There were voices calling for a distinctive American standard and steps were taken to distinguish it from British English. At this point, British English was no longer admired, in fact, it was considered corrupted and on the decline. At this stage, many new words were coined and spelling adjusted to differentiate from British English (Crystal, 2003: 142). In the last phase which continues up to the present day, American English caught up with British English and in many ways exceeded it (Strevens, 1972: 42). By this time, Britain has lost most of its

⁷ Do You Speak American? <http://www.pbs.org/speak/ahead/change/ruining/> accessed 29th December 2012.

colonial possessions whereas the USA has become a political world power that exerts its influence over most of the world.

2.1.3.3 American (Linguistic) Dominance

There is a close link between power and language which shows in the fact that American English has much greater influence on English anywhere in the world than any other English speaking nations have ever had (Crystal, 2003: 127). This situation generates anxiety on the side of the other English speaking countries whose language and culture thus changes and necessarily also causes anti-American feelings. In case of Britain, we can see a reversal of a pattern. As noted above (2.1.3.2), with growing confidence, the former American colonies also started to mind interventions from the outside and began to hold British English in scorn as a corrupted language. In fact the roots of anti-American feelings go back to the mid nineteenth century when the American influence started to grow. The anti-American feelings in Britain intensified in the years after World War II. with the USA being on its economical climax and with Britain losing most of its remaining colonial possessions. According to the authors of *Issues in Americanisation and Culture* (Campbell, Davies and McKay, 2004: 20), Americanisation is the outcome of this crisis of Britishness and a “symptom of anxieties about one’s own national identity” (ibid.: 20). Anti-American feelings are thus just a way of dealing with their anxieties by looking for the culprit that supposedly caused the loss of the prestige (ibid.: 20).

But Americanisation did not only face opposition. For the young postwar generation, American culture was connected with novelty and had an irresistible appeal. An added value was the fact that their parents mostly disagreed with this new fashion. Partially, the distaste

of the older generation was a reaction to what they saw as a threat to their old ways – the technological boom, urbanization and fear that they will not be able to control their children (ibid.: 13). Acceptance of American culture was not just a passive process of copying the western style. The American culture was not merely reinvented, but adjusted to British taste and thus the new British culture was devised (ibid.: 13).

What made the American culture so appealing to the young generation was the fact that it was much more progressive than the British culture. Americans were not as tradition bound as the British and readily accepted innovations of any kind. The new media such as TV, radio, films, theatre, newspapers and popular music generated a large number of new words. Most of these were just results of the fleeting fashion and did not take root. Lexical innovation did not entirely avoid Britain but a majority of new terms were coined in the USA and then introduced in Britain (Strevens, 1972: 41 - 42). Here we, of course, have to take into account the fact that there are four to five times more American English speakers than British English speakers therefore there will always be more new coining coming from the USA⁸. The new terms that became widely used even after the fashion that originally produced them passed are: *muppet* from the American TV show The Muppets and *bada bing* meaning “something happening suddenly, emphatically, or easily and predictably”⁹, a term that was used in the American TV show the Sopranos. The term *lovely jubbly*, the courtesy of the British sitcom Only Fools and Horses, is a proof that British media could also invent new catchy expressions¹⁰.

⁸ Do You Speak American? <http://www.pbs.org/speak/ahead/change/ruining/> accessed 29th December 2012.

⁹ OED <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/257595?redirectedFrom=bada+bing#eid> accessed 29th December 2012.

¹⁰ BBC News http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3166815.stm accessed 30th December 2012.

In the fifties and sixties British viewers were overwhelmed with American programs conveying to them American lifestyle and English. The influence was so immense that even the domestic production was transformed to resemble American genres and techniques. Despite the claims to the contrary, even BBC succumbed to the new trend and adjusted its programs to what became a new popular taste in Britain (Malchow, 2011: 17). Yet according to Peter Trudgill¹¹, watching TV has a lesser impact on language than the people we come into contact with. There is a growing lexical congruence between the two varieties but only on the level of vocabulary. Accent, on the other hand, is becoming more and more dissimilar.

¹¹ *Language Change* http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/yourvoice/language_change.shtml accessed 2nd January 2013.

2.2 Corpus-supported Approaches

In my research I used corpora to provide evidence of the differences between the two language varieties. Depending on the approach used in corpus study, the results may vary. In this thesis, I shall apply two opposing corpus study approaches – the corpus-driven and the corpus-based approach. This will give me the advantage of two different points of view as regards lexical differences between the two varieties.

2.2.1 Corpus-driven Approach

As Elena Tognini-Bonelli states (2001: 87), the aim of this approach is to define linguistic categories by assessing repetitive patterns and frequency of occurrence of lexical units in the language. In this approach, the corpus is viewed as the sole ground on which statements and theories are based. No pre-existing theories and expectations are taken into consideration when applying this method of corpus study. (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 84 – 85)

2.2.2 Corpus-based Approach

In the corpus-driven approach, the corpus is treated as a compact whole. The corpus-based approach, on the other hand, is strictly selective (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 84). The corpus will be used not as a sole source of evidence upon which a linguistic theory can be based, but as a supporting tool to validate or disprove language theories concerning the two language varieties as they are published in secondary literature.

3. Material and Methods

3.1 Corpora Used

3.1.1 American English 2006 and British English 2006

In my research I compared the data from AmE06 with the data from BrE06. Both corpora belong to the Brown family and, therefore, are built using the same sampling frame. The British English 2006 corpus is composed of 500 texts and of the overall word count is 1,146,597 words¹². It comprises texts that were published between the years 2003 and 2008, majority of which were published between 2005 and 2007. The year 2006, therefore, forms a median point. The texts in the corpus were selected from 15 various genres with internet being the chief source¹³. The American English 2006 corpus was created in order to become a companion corpus to the BE06 corpus. The data for the corpus was, therefore, also collected from texts available online, encompassing the same 15 genres. The publication dates of the texts included in this corpus vary between the year 2004 and 2008, with most texts being centred at the year 2006 (Potts and Baker, 2012: 301 – 302). The size of the corpus is also comparable. It contains 1,175,965 words that come from 500 various texts¹⁴.

3.1.2 COCA and BNC

I also compared the frequencies of selected lexical units in COCA and BNC. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (or COCA) currently comprises more than 450 million words. New texts are regularly added in order to keep the corpus up-to-date. As regards the genre representation, the data in COCA evenly cover spoken language, fiction, popular

¹² <http://cgpweb.lancs.ac.uk/be2006/index.php?thisQ=corpusMetadata&uT=y> accessed 1st May 2013.

¹³ http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/groups/crg/files/CRG-w28-Baker_slides.pdf accessed 1st May 2013.

¹⁴ <http://cgpweb.lancs.ac.uk/ame06/index.php?thisQ=corpusMetadata&uT=y> accessed 1st May 2013.

magazines, newspaper, and the academic genre. The texts included in the corpus date between 1990 and 2012. With the size of 100 million words, the British National Corpus (BNC) is more than four times smaller than COCA. Unlike COCA, BNC is not balanced as regards genre representation. Majority of the data comes from written resources, amounting to 90% of the texts, as opposed to 10% of spoken text¹⁵. The British National Corpus is not as up-to-date as COCA. The texts in the corpus date between 1970s a 1994¹⁶. When comparing the data from these two corpora, these differences have to be taken into consideration. Because of their size difference, lower frequency lexical units cannot be studied using the comparison of these two corpora. The comparison cannot be applied in case of lexical units newly coined or reintroduced after the year 1993 either. Because of their differing genre representation, the relative frequencies of some lexical units may not correspond. Yet with BNC and COCA being the only large, relatively up-to-date and freely accessible corpora currently available, no better tools can be applied¹⁷.

3.2 Application of Approaches to Corpora

3.2.1 Corpus-Driven Approach

The BE06 and AmE06 corpora have been chosen as the most appropriate sources for this approach because of the fact that these are the most up-to-date pairs of corpora presently available. In comparison to other available pairs of corpora, the BE06 and AmE06 corpora are much smaller in size. Yet this limitation proved to be an advantage in my research for it

¹⁵ <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/> accessed 1st May 2013.

¹⁶ <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/> accessed 1st May 2013.

¹⁷ <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/> accessed 1st May 2013.

rendered it possible for me to thoroughly examine the concordances. Furthermore, their comparable size, genre representation and dating enabled a compelling keyword analysis.

3.2.2 Corpus-Based Approach

I chose to apply this approach to the comparison of COCA and BNC. An attempt has been made to adopt the same approach in the research of BE06 and AmE06 as well, but the size of the two corpora proved to be an obstacle. The number of hits did not always allow a convincing comparison of the two language varieties. To conclusively prove or disprove a language theory advocated in secondary literature, the volume of the tested data has to be larger. Because of their size and compatibility, COCA and BNC proved to be the best possible ground on which to put the theories to the test.

4. Research Part

4.1 Corpus-driven Approach

4.1.1 Procedure

The two corpora were contrasted by comparing their keyword lists. In my research I compared the word forms in BE06 to those in AmE06 while using the setting of minimum frequency at 5 on both sides and significance threshold of 0.01%. The results were sorted according to the value of their keyness (log-likelihood).

4.1.2 Findings

The keywords were further divided into four groups:

- proper nouns¹⁸
- common nouns and other (lexical) words
- punctuation
- spelling differences

Table 1 records the proportional representation of these four groups in the examined keyword lists.

¹⁸ The category “proper nouns” comprises names of persons and geographical areas (states, towns and cities) here (cf. Baker, 2001).

Table 1: Incidence of proper nouns, common nouns and other (lexical) words, punctuation and spelling differences in the AmE06 and BE06 keyword lists in percentages

	AmE	BrE
Proper nouns	13.74%	12.22%
Common nouns and (other) lexical words	76.85%	79.96%
Punctuation	3.02%	5.45%
Spelling differences	6.38%	2.36%
Total	100%	100%

Regarding the other three groups of very little relevance for the present study, I then divided the group of common nouns and other (lexical) words into categories according to subject fields. Previous research analyzing these corpora from cultural perspective provided me with an expedient division into categories (Baker, 2011). The following table contains all the common nouns and other (lexical) words that occurred in the top two hundred American and British keywords with the exception of words of negligible informational value for the research (e.g. numerals, prepositions).

Table 2: Key common nouns and other (lexical) words divided into cultural categories

	Cultural Category	Key in British English	Key in American English	Summary ¹⁹
1	Administration and Politics	Pounds, police, Council, Crime, Minister, PRINCE, Prime, Royal, Government	Federal, president, state, congress, Republican, industry, administration, nation, historical, Democrats, History, County, officials, Democratic, supreme, Legislative, White, border, Governor	Am
2	Social Hierarchy	Children, Child, infant, parental	Peer	BE
3	Military		WAR, Military, Torture, NUCLEAR	Am
4	Science and Technology	km, transport	transportation, industry	Am / BE
5	Education	Universities		BE
6	Arts	Music	Art	Am / BE
7	Personal Reference	British, It	American, Americans	Am / BE
8	Modality and Auxiliaries	Will		BE
9	Be and Have	BE, Being, BEEN, WAS, Have		BE
10	Equality / Rights		Feminism	Am
11	Social Welfare	Advice, services, scheme, carbon, Local, Flat, garden, sector, provision		BE
12	Health/Illness	mental, risk, Exercise, aged, Age, Headache, symptoms, weight, milk, sample, Health, Pain, Exposure	Insurance, dose, DNA, cells	BE
13	Data Analysis	Analyses, proportion, Increased, score, Aim, scale, variables, range, participants, Assessment, data		BE
14	Business		sales, commission, operations, export, personnel, distribution	Am

On examining the top two hundred American and British keywords, it could be said that the American corpus contains more terms associated with administration and politics, military,

¹⁹ The column “summary” indicates which language variety contains more keywords in the given category.

rights and equality, and business. In comparison to other categories, the category of administration and politics substantially stands out. Keywords in the British corpus were more representative of the fields of social hierarchy, education, social welfare, health and illness, and data analysis. The British corpus also contained more cases of modality and auxiliaries, as well as more occurrences of *be* and *have*. Despite being outrun by the American corpus in the field of administration and politics, in comparison to other categories, the field of administration and politics seems to belong to strong referential topics in British English. Other fields were balanced.

4.1.3 Evaluation of this Method

While this method showed significant differences in frequencies between the two varieties, I would not like to draw any conclusions regarding the cultural differences this research might seem to mirror. In 2.2.1 I stated that this approach fully depends on the corpus as the only evidence and basis for any subsequent linguistic theories. However, as Tognini-Bonelli points out, determining what the corpus-driven approach gives us evidence of, can be rather troublesome (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 78). Firstly, there is the question of representativeness (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 57). Especially with corpora as small as BE06 and AmE06, we cannot be certain whether the corpora comprise all the topics representative of the culture of the speakers of the particular language variety. Moreover, the coverage of an individual topic may be due to the sampling method employed in the construction of the corpus. Another issue which might distort the results is the matter of placement into categories (Potts, Baker, 2012: 298). Comparing my results with those reached by Paul Baker in his research, a slight variance can be seen because there are no firm criteria for deciding which category a

particular word goes under. Further problem is the possible occurrence of polysemous words in the corpora (Potts, Baker, 2012: 298). Frequencies of the separate meanings of the polysemous word would have to be taken into consideration. Therefore, it can be said that this research merely outlines possible cultural differences. An accompanying socio-cultural research would have been necessary to complete and verify the result of this approach.

4.2 Corpus-Based Approach

4.2.1 Procedure

I shall focus on lexical units whose presence in both varieties is undeniable, yet whose connotations and distributions differ or which have an additional meaning in American English (cf. 2.1.1.1.4). The point of departure of this research is the claims made in secondary literature concerning the differences in meaning, connotations and distributions of the above described lexical units. I shall compare the data drawn from BNC and COCA and track signs of variation in meanings, connotations and distributions of the selected lexical units.

Thus I shall either confirm or disprove the assertions made in secondary literature.

Semantic nuances of the above mentioned type can be best detected by looking at collocations²⁰. Therefore, I chose to compare the collocations of selected lexical units as they occur in BNC and COCA and compare the occurrences of the word in the meaning(s) the two varieties have in common and in the meaning which secondary sources claim to be restricted only to the American variety. Thus I shall identify which lexical units belonging to the above mentioned category (cf. 2.1.1.1.4) have been influenced by the American use of the word. Yet not all words described in literature as having a different or additional meaning in

²⁰ <http://corpus.byu.edu/comparing-corpora.asp> accessed 6th May 2013.

American English proved to be suitable for the comparison of collocations. An attempt has been made to thus identify the meaning of the lexical unit “bathroom”. Trudgill and Hannah recognize the meaning in common as “[a] room with bath or shower and sink”, and the additional meaning as “[a] room with toilet only” (1997: 89). However, I found it impossible to identify the meaning from the collocations. A more descriptive characterization would have been needed. Therefore I focused on adjectives since their main syntactic role is to modify a noun (Dušková et al., 1994: 143). By looking at the nouns, I should be able to determine the meanings of their modifiers.

4.2.2 Findings

The following tables contain the results of the comparison of the first ten most significant (defined by MI-score) noun – adjective collocations in BNC and COCA. The table compares the first ten occurrences of the ten most significant collocations in both, BNC and COCA. Due to its smaller size, as well as the less frequent use of the chosen adjectives in BrE, the results from BNC do not always contain ten occurrences of the given collocation. All of the following adjectives (apart from “good”) can occur in both, attributive and predicative positions, the scope was, therefore, set to the position {-4, + 4}. The collocations are sorted by relevancy (the frequency is restricted by setting the minimum frequency at 10). In all of the searches I used the side-by-side comparison function.

CUTE

Meaning in common – “endearing” (when talking about animals or children)

Additional meaning in AmE – “attractive, charming” (when talking about adults) (Trudgill and Hannah, 1997: 89)

Table 3: The most significant collocates of “cute” in AmE (1:COCA)²¹

	WORD/PHRASE	1: COCA	2: BNC	endearing	attractive/charming	inconclusive
1	GIRL	141	1	4	6	0
2	GUY	135	0	0	10	0
3	BOY	85	0	3	7	0
4	GIRLS	56	0	0	10	0
5	GUYS	55	0	2	8	0
6	THING	55	1	7	3	0
7	KIND	45	1	N/A	N/A	N/A ²²
8	WOMAN	42	1	0	10	0
9	THINGS	42	0	9	1	0
10	BABY	79	2	10	0	0
TOTAL				35	55	0

Table 4: The most significant collocates of “cute” in BrE (2:BNC)

	WORD/PHRASE	2: BNC	1: COCA	endearing	attractive/charming	inconclusive
1	QUOTIENT	7	1	7	0	0
2	APPEAL	2	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	ADULT	2	1	1	0	0
4	CURLS	2	1	0	0	1
5	BIRTHDAY	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	CAFE	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	REMARK	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
8	SERIES	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	APPEARANCE	1	1	1	0	0
10	ARTWORK	1	1	1	0	0
TOTAL				10	0	1

As the table 4 shows, the word “cute” in American English is more often used in connection with adults than with children or animals (in ratio of 55 : 35 occurrences). This could be most convincingly seen in the results of the words “guy” and “woman”. What seems to be a

²¹ The frequency of the collocation in the other variety in this and all the following tables is given for comparison purposes (e.g. 2: BNC in this particular case).

²²“N/A” in this and all the following tables signifies that all the hits were coincidental, non-collocational occurrences.

deviation from the common use in AmE are the two occurrences of the “cute guys” collocation in the meaning of endearing. Yet on closer inspection, it becomes clear that these cases do not refer to adult males.

1. *How do people get these **chimps and monkeys**? Are there - do you go online and get ads which seduce you and say, oh, you know, you'll never have more fun than you will with these cute little guys?*²³

2. *[...] of the bottles that Jeff's mother was using to make **mimosas** for herself and her boyfriend and Jeff's older sisters. [...] " They do so much, " marveled Carlos. # " And I grew them like yeast, " said Jeff. " In the right environment these cute little guys can self-assemble [...]*

The referents in both of the examples come from the realm of fauna and flora – “chimps and monkeys” in example number 1 and “mimosa” in number 2. The premodifying adjective “little” further strengthens the meaning of endearing.

Since the words “girl” and “boy” can refer to either, an adult person or a child, the occurrences in both meanings are corresponding. Because the word “baby” occurred only in the meaning of an infant in the first ten hits, the word “cute” means “endearing” in all of the hits. In the case of the words “thing” and “things”, it had to be decided what these stand for. As the results show, they mostly applied to children and animals; the meaning of “endearing” therefore prevails. The following examples exemplify the occurrence of the collocation with “cute” in both of the meanings.

1. *I got to know this **kid** pretty well. He was really cute. Five years old. Cute little thing.*

²³ All the collocations exemplified in this thesis are to be found in the appendices under the particular collocation.

2. And *mom*, I want to say that you're the most cute thing in the whole wide world.

The first example is an instance of the use in the meaning of “endearing”. The second example refers to an adult (“mom”) and represents the use in the meaning of “attractive/charming”.

As table 4 shows, in British English, the most common meaning of “cute” proved to be that of “endearing”. However, the results showed several problematic points. The first problem encountered in the research was the high incidence of coincidental, non-collocational co-occurrences of the searched lexical units. Another problem was the scarcity of sources from which the collocations stem. This could be seen in the seemingly high occurrence of the collocation “cute quotient” because all of the hits come from a single source. Furthermore, in all of the hits “cute quotient” is not integrated into a sentence structure:

Jerry Hall CUTE QUOTIENT: Potentially pretty with bright blue eyes, a sweet smile and Jagger lips.

The placement of the collocation with “adult” into the endearing group is based on the fact that the noun applies to adult animals. The collocation “cute curls” is the only collocation where I was not able to determine the meaning of the adjective. This collocation is used to describe an adult hair style, and therefore would be placed into the attractive/charming group. Yet it could also be argued that the hair style is reminiscent of little children’s hair style, and would therefore belong to the other group.

DUMB

Meaning in common – “mute”

Additional meaning in AmE – “stupid” (Trudgill and Hannah, 1997: 89)

Table 5: The most significant collocates of “dumb” in AmE

	WORD/PHRASE	1: COCA	2: BNC	mute	stupid	inconclusive
1	LUCK	143	1	0	10	0
2	THINGS	114	1	0	10	0
3	IDEA	69	1	0	10	0
4	GUY	55	0	0	10	0
5	ASS	44	0	0	10	0
6	JOCK	44	0	0	10	0
7	THING	115	3	0	10	0
8	WAY	36	0	0	4	0
9	JOKES	28	0	0	10	0
10	STUFF	28	0	0	10	0
TOTAL	-	-	-	0	94	0

Table 6: The most significant collocates of “dumb” in BrE

	WORD/PHRASE	2: BNC	1: COCA	mute	stupid	inconclusive
1	HOPPER	14	1	10	0	0
2	ASSOCIATION	26	0	10	0	0
3	POPULATION	5	1	5	0	0
4	SOCIETY	17	5	10	0	0
5	ADULT	13	4	10	0	0
6	EDUCATION	3	1	3	0	0
7	CHILDREN	14	7	10	0	0
8	TIMES	8	4	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	DAYS	2	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	HEADS	2	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL				58	0	0

As tables 5 and 6 show, in case of the word “dumb”, the meanings in the two varieties seem to gravitate towards opposing poles. While all of the hits in COCA show preference for the meaning of “stupid”(e.g. *Look, attacking the United States is a very dumb idea.*) , BNC proved preference for the meaning in common, i.e. “mute” (e.g. *this service was of great value to the deaf and dumb population*) .

GOOD

Meaning in common – “fine, nice” etc.

Additional meaning in AmE – “valid” (Trudgill and Hannah, 1997: 90)

In the case of the word “good”, a different approach had to be applied because the meaning of “valid” proved to be rather marginal. I therefore intentionally located collocates that co-occur with the word “good” in its additional American meaning. In this meaning, the adjective “good” occurs only in predicative position. The scope was, therefore set to the position 4 – 0. The collocations are sorted by relevancy (with the minimum frequency set at 10 – 10). Where possible, the side-by-side comparison function was used.

Table 7: The most significant occurrences of the selected collocates of “good” in AmE and BrE

	AmE		BrE	
	meaning in common	additional American meaning	meaning in common	additional American meaning
ticket	1	9	0	0
tickets	0	10	0	1
stamp	0	0	0	0
voucher	1	8	0	0
vouchers	1	4	0	0
pass	1	9	0	0
passes	0	4	0	0
coin	0	2	0	0
coins	1	0	0	0
offers	4	2	0	0
offer	6	4	4	0
check	1	8		
checks	3	1		
cheque			2	2
cheques			1	0
bill	0	1		
bills	0	1		
notes			0	0
note			0	0

This search provided a convincing proof that in this case, although its occurrence is rather rare, the American additional meaning entered British English. The following example gives

evidence of the American use of the word “good” in British English: *he was told that his tickets were only good for the front door.*

REGULAR

Meaning in common – “consistent, habitual”

Additional meaning in AmE – “average” (as in size), “normal” (Trudgill and Hannah, 1997: 90)

Table 8: The most significant collocates of “regular” in AmE

	WORD/PHRASE	1: COCA	2: BNC	consistent/habitual	average/normal	inconclusive
1	CLASSROOM	480	2	0	10	0
2	CLASSROOMS	200	0	0	10	0
3	SCHEDULE	185	1	10	0	0
4	FOLKS	131	1	0	10	0
5	CURRICULUM	130	1	0	10	0
6	PERCENT	126	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	SEASON	2118	23	0	10	0
8	MENU	157	2	0	10	0
9	EDUCATORS	77	0	0	10	0
10	GALLON	77	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL				10	70	0

Table 9: The most significant collocates of “regular” in BrE

	WORD/PHRASE	2: BNC	1: COCA	consistent/habitual	average/normal	inconclusive
1	MIGRANT	10	1	9	0	0
2	LUMP	9	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	SCHEMES	8	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	DEMAND	7	1	4	0	0
5	RECRUITS	7	1	0	3	0
6	CENT	13	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	POLYGON	13	2	10	0	0
8	PILOT	6	1	1	1	0
9	SPRAYING	6	1	6	0	0
10	TERMS	6	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL				30	4	0

According to the results in table 8, the predominant meaning in American English is that of average/normal. Although originally restricted to the American variety only, table 9 shows that this meaning is also used in British English. Interestingly, both of the nouns that collocate with “regular” in its originally American sense in BNC seem to be connected with the air and police forces. Presumably, both collocations belong to international terminology used in the forces. (e.g. *Stories relating the inexperience and ineptitude of young regular recruits or their laziness are particularly common amongst the parttime reserve police.*)

CLEVER

The difference in British and American usage of the word “clever” is not one of an additional American meaning. The use in the two varieties differs in connotation.

BrE usage – positive

AmE usage – usually negative (“sly”) (Trudgill and Hannah, 1997: 90)

Table 10: The most significant collocates of “clever” in AmE

	WORD/PHRASE	1: COCA	2: BNC	positive	negative	inconclusive
1	WAYS	79	3	10	0	0
2	GUY	22	1	7	3	0
3	GAME	17	1	3	5	0
4	KID	15	0	8	1	1
5	TECHNOLOGY	14	0	6	1	0
6	SCHEME	14	1	4	6	0
7	CHEATS	14	0	0	2	0
8	LINE	13	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	TACTICS	13	1	2	6	2
10	NAMES	13	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	-	-	-	40	24	3

Table 11: The most significant collocates of “clever” in BrE

	WORD/PHRASE	2: BNC	1: COCA	positive	negative	inconclusive
1	ONES	10	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	PASS	7	1	7	0	0
3	CLOGS	6	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	CHAP	6	1	6	0	0
5	FOOL	4	1	2	0	0
6	DICKS	4	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	DOGS	4	1	3	0	0
8	MISS	6	2	1	2	0
9	SPIDER	3	1	0	1	0
10	RESEARCH	3	1	1	0	0
TOTAL				20	3	0

Although the secondary literature claims that “clever” in AmE usually occurs in negative connotation, my research shows majority of the hits being positive (table 10). As table 11 shows, “clever” in its negative connotation also occurs in British English, although not as frequently as in the American variety. Despite its obviously negative connotation in the three marked cases, the negativity of the adjective does not seem as strong as in the cases registered by COCA. Looking closer at the collocation “clever spider” as it appears in BNC, the suggested synonym “sly” appears to be too strong: [...] *all falling victims to the same spider, jolly clever spider said Irene*. A more fitting synonymous expression would be “mischievous” in this case. The same applies to the other negative collocations in BNC. In the sentence: [...] *fur muff on which that clever Miss Adeane had stitched, at the last moment and quite behind Miss Baker's back, a truly enormous blue velvet bow*, the adjective “clever” is again synonymous of “mischievous”.

CHEAP

Meaning in common – “inexpensive”

Additional meanings in AmE – “tawdry”; “stingy” (Schur, 2007: 67)

Table 12: The most significant collocates of “cheap” in AmE

	WORD/PHRASE	1: COCA	2: BNC	inexpensive	tawdry	stingy	inconclusive
1	<u>STOCKS</u>	<u>138</u>	<u>0</u>	10	0	0	0
2	<u>SHOTS</u>	<u>105</u>	<u>1</u>	0	10	0	0
3	<u>STOCK</u>	<u>78</u>	<u>0</u>	10	0	0	0
4	<u>MOTEL</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>1</u>	10	0	0	0
5	<u>FIX</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>0</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	<u>MOTELS</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>0</u>	10	0	0	0
7	<u>DATE</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>0</u>	10	0	0	0
8	<u>TRANSPORTATION</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>1</u>	10	0	0	0
9	<u>FIXES</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>1</u>	1	0	0	0
10	<u>SHOT</u>	<u>201</u>	<u>7</u>	0	10	0	0
TOTAL				61	20	0	0

Table 13: The most significant collocates of “cheap” in BrE

	WORD/PHRASE	2: BNC	1: COCA	inexpensive	tawdry	stingy	inconclusive
1	<u>MINUTE</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>1</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	<u>ACCOMMODATION</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>1</u>	10	0	0	0
3	<u>36P</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>0</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	<u>48P</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>0</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	<u>PROVISION</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>	1	0	0	0
6	<u>RATE</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>13</u>	10	0	0	0
7	<u>MIN</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>1</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
8	<u>ONES</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>4</u>	10	0	0	0
9	<u>WORKS</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	1	0	0	0
10	<u>ACT</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	0	1	0	0
TOTAL				32	1	0	0

My research shows that the word “cheap” is predominantly used in the sense common for both of the varieties. The search did not yield any results for the additional American meaning of “stingy”, indicating that this use is rather marginal. The word “cheap” in collocation with “shot” or “shots” seems to be predominantly used in the meaning of “tawdry” in American English (table 12). British English also accommodates this meaning, as

shown in the collocation with “act” where the noun is pre-modified by two synonymic expressions: *that is a cheap and tawdry act* (table 13).

MAD

Meaning in common – “crazy”

Additional meaning in AmE – “angry” (Salama and Ghali, 1982: 187)

Table 14: The most significant collocates of “mad” in AmE

	WORD/PHRASE	1: COCA	2: BNC	crazy	angry	inconclusive
1	<u>RIVER</u>	<u>287</u>	<u>1</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	<u>MAGAZINE</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>0</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	<u>MOM</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>0</u>	0	10	0
4	<u>TV</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>0</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	<u>PRESIDENT</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>0</u>	0	10	0
6	<u>DADDY</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>0</u>	0	10	0
7	<u>KIND</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>1</u>	2	0	0
8	<u>SCIENTIST</u>	<u>153</u>	<u>5</u>	10	0	0
9	<u>SCIENTISTS</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>2</u>	9	1	0
10	<u>HELL</u>	<u>191</u>	<u>7</u>	0	5	0
TOTAL				21	36	0

Table 15: The most significant collocates of “mad” in BrE

	WORD/PHRASE	2: BNC	1: COCA	crazy	angry	inconclusive
1	<u>GALLOP</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	4	0	0
2	<u>MIXTURE</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	1	0	0
3	<u>MM</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	<u>ANIMALS</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>	6	0	0
5	<u>ONES</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	<u>PASS</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	<u>DICTATOR</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	3	0	0
8	<u>POUNDS</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	<u>PURPOSE</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	<u>RIDES</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	2	0	0
TOTAL				16	0	0

My research showed American preference for the use of “mad” in the meaning of “angry” (table 14). This meaning still seems to be restricted to the American usage for none of the examined hits in BNC proved this use in British English. The example number 1 exemplifies the use of the adjective “mad” in the meaning in common, while the second example represents the American use.

1. *I do wonder if the King's mad gallop through a storm-blown night finally unhinged his mind. (BNC)*

2. *but she still didn't understand why her mom had gotten so mad (COCA)*

NEAT

Meaning in common – “orderly”

Additional meaning in AmE – “nice/cool”²⁴

Table 16: The most significant collocates of “neat” in AmE

	WORD/PHRASE	1: COCA	2: BNC	orderly	nice/cool	inconclusive
1	PLACE	45	1	6	4	0
2	FREAK	35	0	10	0	0
3	THING	127	4	0	10	0
4	TRICK	78	3	0	10	0
5	APARTMENT	25	1	7	0	3
6	GUY	23	0	5	5	0
7	KIND	41	2	0	10	0
8	STACKS	41	2	10	0	0
9	STUFF	59	3	1	9	0
10	HOMES	19	0	10	0	0
TOTAL				49	48	3

²⁴ <http://corpus.byu.edu/comparing-corpora.asp> accessed 1st May 2013.

Table 17: The most significant collocates of “neat” in BrE

	WORD/PHRASE	2: BNC	1: COCA	orderly	nice/cool	inconclusive
1	FINISH	13	1	10	0	0
2	FOOTBALL	6	1	5	0	0
3	COLLAR	5	1	4	0	0
4	CONTROL	5	1	3	0	0
5	LEGS	4	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	WHISKY	7	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	EDGE	12	4	10	0	0
8	BALANCE	3	1	3	0	0
9	BANDS	3	1	2	0	0
10	BOB	3	1	2	0	0
TOTAL				39	0	0

As table 16 shows, in American English the usage of the word in the two meanings is balanced. British English, on the other hand, utilizes the word “neat” only in the meaning of “orderly” (table 17). The use of the American meaning of the adjective could be seen in the sentence: *Some felt that the social relationships with colleagues made the school a “neat place to work ”* (COCA). The meaning in common is exemplified in the sentence: *Finally, hem all round the cloth to give a neat finish.* (BNC)

COOL

Meanings in common – “moderately cold”, “(of clothing, fabric, etc.) that produces a sensation of coolness”, “dispassionate (of a person)”, “(of a thing or action) characterized by or exhibiting calmness, composure”, “used to emphasize the size of a quantity, orig. and chiefly a sum of money”

Additional meanings in AmE – “Attractively shrewd or clever; sophisticated, stylish, classy; fashionable, up to date; sexually attractive”²⁵

Table 18: The most significant collocates of “cool” in AmE

	WORD/PHRASE	1: COCA	2: BNC	cold	stylish	inconclusive
1	PAN	193	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	KIDS	146	1	0	10	0
3	MIN	103	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	PANS	93	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	BOWL	89	1	4	1	0
6	CAKE	87	1	10	0	0
7	IDEA	82	1	0	10	0
8	GUYS	74	0	0	10	0
9	GUY	143	2	0	10	0
10	NIGHTS	132	2	10	0	0
TOTAL				24	41	0

Table 19: The most significant collocates of “cool” in BrE

	WORD/PHRASE	2: BNC	1: COCA	cold	stylish	inconclusive
1	BOXES	5	1	5	0	0
2	MILLION	9	2	9	0	0
3	FOUNTAIN	4	1	1	0	1
4	NEED	6	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	MOCKERY	6	2	5	0	0
6	EFFECTIVENESS	3	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	IRONY	3	1	2	0	0
8	RETURN	3	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	MUM	3	1	1	2	0
10	EMPHASIS	3	1	1	0	0
TOTAL				24	2	1

²⁵ <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40978?rskey=bBILwX&result=3&isAdvanced=false#eid> accessed 2nd May

In COCA the additional meaning represented majority of the hits. As could be seen in table 18, the adjective in this additional meaning mostly collocates with nouns applying to people (“kids”, “guys”, “guy”), but also with abstract nouns (“idea”) and marginally objects (“bowl”). Table 19 provides evidence that the additional American meaning has already entered British English. To exemplify, I shall use one of the hits from BNC: *My mum is cool, I love my mum*. To contrast this use with the use of the adjective “cool” in the common meaning, I chose an example from COCA: *Let sit, still covered, until cabbage has absorbed its brine and bowl is cool to the touch, about 15 minutes*.

4.2.3 Evaluation of this Method

As has been mentioned in 3.1.2, the two corpora used in this research are not comparable as regards the size and dating. This discrepancy also shows in the research and may have influences the results. The size difference can be best seen in the number of hits. In COCA the number of hits was not an issue. With the exception of a few collocations, it was always possible to find the required number of occurrences. In BNC, on the other hand, the required ten occurrences were rarely found. This could be also partly ascribed to the rare occurrence or non-existence of the additional American meaning in British English. The results are therefore based on a limited number of occurrences which may not correctly reflect the real state of British English. The out-datedness of BNC brings forward the question of comparability to contemporary British English. Especially in case of the adjective “cool”, a more recent corpus would be most likely to yield results suggesting a strong shift towards the additional American meaning. The BNC corpus provides evidence of language

use between the 1970s and the year 1994²⁶, the shifts in meanings recorded in this research therefore also apply only to this above mentioned period.

Another problem encountered in the research was connected with correctly identifying the meaning of the observed adjective. In several cases, the context did not provide enough base on which it would be possible to determine the meaning of the lexical unit in question. Therefore I had to introduce the category named “inconclusive”.

In the introduction to this research I set out to either prove or disprove the theories mentioned in secondary literature. Despite the encountered problems, this goal has been accomplished. It provided evidence of expansion of meanings of five (“good”, “regular”, “clever”, “cheap” and “cool”) of the nine selected adjectives to include the originally American additional meanings.

²⁶ <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>, accessed 1st May 2013.

5. Conclusion

This thesis dealt with selected lexical differences between British and American English and the influence of American English on the British variety. Corpus-driven and corpus-based approaches have been used in order to further identify the selected differences from two different points of view.

In the first part of the research, the corpus-driven method was used for comparison of keyword lists. The keywords were first divided into four groups – proper nouns, common nouns and (other) lexical words, punctuation and spelling differences. Since this present study was focused on lexical differences, the groups of punctuation and spelling differences were discarded. The group of proper nouns was ruled out as irrelevant for the study.

Common nouns and other (lexical) words were then divided into subject fields. Based on lexical preferences in each of the language variety, the comparison outlined possible cultural differences between the two nations. The American keyword list showed preferences for terms from the fields of administration and politics, military, rights and equality, and business. The British corpus contained more terms from the fields of social hierarchy, education, social welfare, health and illness, and data analysis. This research pointed out that the difference between the two language varieties is not just a matter of different word choice, but also of a different outlook and culture.

In the second part of the research, the corpus-based method was used in order to detect possible shifts in meanings of adjectives that occur between the two varieties of the English language but whose connotations or distributions differ or which have an additional meaning in the American variety. Nine adjectives which meet the above mentioned requirements were chosen and put to test; these included: “cute”, “dumb”, “good”,

“regular”, “clever”, “cheap”, “mad”, “neat”, and “cool”. Lexical convergence has been confirmed in five out of the nine adjectives – “good”, “regular”, “clever”, “cheap”, and “cool”. The meanings of these adjectives expanded to include the originally American connotations or distributions, or new meanings have been added under the influence of American use. This result corresponds to the general trends in British English.

For further research it would be advisable to compare occurrences of the same adjectives used in the corpus-based method with their occurrences in earlier pairs of corpora in order to track development of the American influence. A more recent corpus of British English would also be needed in order to depict the current level of convergence between the two Englishes. Such research would most likely yield even more convincing evidence of the American influence on the British variety.

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Résumé

Bakalářská práce je zaměřená na lexikální rozdíly mezi americkou a britskou angličtinou a na přechod lexikálních jednotek z jedné jazykové variety do druhé. Speciální pozornost je věnována amerikanismům v britské angličtině a jejich postupnému rozšiřování. Hlavní těžiště práce vychází z předpokladu, že významné postavení americké kultury ve světě přispívá k přejímání lexikálních jednotek z americké do britské angličtiny. Cílem práce je za pomoci korpusové studie zmapovat lexikální rozdíly mezi oběma varietami angličtiny a popsat lexikální důsledky vlivu americké kultury na britskou slovní zásobu.

Teoretická část je rozdělena na dvě části. Zčásti patří studiu lexikálních rozdílů mezi britskou a americkou angličtinou a procesu přejímání slov z jedné jazykové variety do druhé a zčásti popisu korpusových metod využitelných při zkoumání těchto lexikálních rozdílů a procesu přejímání slov. Nejprve jsou rozebrány lexikální podobnosti a rozdíly mezi oběma varietami anglického jazyka. Slovní zásoba jako taková je z hlediska rozdílů a podobností rozdělena na čtyři skupiny: 1. na společnou slovní zásobu; 2. na společné pojmy, jež jsou vyjádřeny různými slovy v každé jazykové varietě; 3. na pojmy, jež jsou specifické pouze pro jednu ze dvou zkoumaných variet a 4. na slova, jež existují v obou varietách, ale liší se významem a /nebo užitím. Všechny skupiny jsou charakterizovány a podloženy příklady.

Dále jsou identifikovány oblasti anglické slovní zásoby, v nichž se vyskytuje velké množství rozdílů mezi britskou a americkou angličtinou. Tyto oblasti zahrnují jak pojmy specifické pouze pro americkou angličtinu, tak i společné pojmy, které se vyjádří odlišnými slovy či slova, která se liší nuancemi ve významu či užitím. Celkem bylo určeno šest oblastí: 1. Přírodní a geografické reálie, 2. Společenské a politické instituce, 3. Architektura a bydlení, 4.

Jídlo a pití, 5. Technologie a 6. Oblečení a doplňky. Jak je popsáno v teoretické části, lexikální rozdíly v těchto oblastech mají často historické odůvodnění. Jsou podmíněné životem v odlišných podmínkách, přejímáním slov z jiných jazyků (jazyky původních Američanů, španělština, francouzština,...), existencí odlišných politických a sociálních institucí či prostým odříznutím od jazyka používaného v prapůvodní vlasti.

Pro porozumění důvodům vlivu americké angličtiny na britskou varietu je nutné porozumět mechanice jazykové změny. Proto je dále v teoretické části vysvětlen pojem jazyková změna a popsány vlivy, jež v ní ústí. Na jazykovou změnu je často pohlíženo jako na něco nežádaného. Ve stejném světle je pohlíženo i na vliv americké angličtiny na britskou varietu. Z historického hlediska se jedná o opakovaný proces, avšak opačného směru vlivu. S upadajícím vlivem Británie a rostoucím sebevědomím Spojených Států Amerických jsou spojené také jazykové změny. Zatímco dříve byla vzorem angličtina, kterou se hovořilo v Británii, nyní se význam přesouvá (přesunul) do Spojených Států. Velkou roli sehrála také nová média jako televize, rádio, hudební a filmová produkce, které jsou z velké části americkým monopolem.

V druhé polovině teoretické části jsou představeny korpusové metody využitě ve výzkumu lexikálních rozdílů a přejímání slov. Tyto dvě metody se liší přístupem ke korpusu. Zatímco metoda typu „corpus-driven“ přistupuje ke korpusu jako k jedinému zdroji informací, na jehož základě jsou založeny a formovány teorie, metoda typu „corpus-based“ využívá korpus jako pouhý nástroj k potvrzení či vyvrácení již existujících teorií.

V metodologické části je popsáno, jaké korpusy byly k výzkumu využity a za použití které metody. Párové korpusy American English 2006 a British English 2006, patřící do Brownovy rodiny korpusů, a BNC a COCA jsou zde představeny z hlediska jejich velikosti, datování textů

v nich obsažených a žánrového zastoupení. Je podáno vysvětlení, proč ke zkoumání korpusů American English 2006 a British English 2006 byla využita metoda typu „corpus-driven“ a k porovnání výsledků z BNC a COCA metoda typu „corpus-based“.

V praktické části se nejprve věnuji metodě typu „corpus-driven“. V postupu je popsána metoda porovnání klíčových slov z obou korpusů a hodnoty nastavení při hledání v korpusech. V nálezech rozdělují klíčová slova dle typu rozdílu na vlastní jména, obecná jména a ostatní lexikální slova, interpunkci a rozdíly v pravopise. Jelikož jsem se v tomto výzkumu zaměřila pouze na lexikální rozdíly, vlastní jména, interpunkce a pravopisné rozdíly byly z dalšího zkoumání vyřazeny. Zbývá obecná jména a ostatní lexikální slova byla rozdělena do čtrnácti kategorií, jež byly inspirovány předchozím výzkumem. Dle zastoupení klíčových slov z obou korpusů v jednotlivých kategoriích byly vyvozeny závěry týkající se možných kulturních rozdílů. V korpusu AmE06 byl zjištěn vyšší výskyt klíčových slov spojených s vládou a politikou, s armádou, s občanskými právy a rovnoprávností a s obchodem. Klíčová slova z korpusu BE06 naznačila britskou preferenci pro témata spojená se sociální hierarchií, vzděláním, sociálním zabezpečením, se zdravím a nemocemi a s analýzou dat. V závěrečném zhodnocení byly zmíněny výhody i nevýhody této metody.

V druhé části praktického výzkumu jsou zpravovány poznatky získané za pomoci metody typu „corpus-based“. V tomto výzkumu byly porovnány substantivní kolokace vybraných adjektiv. Tato adjektiva se vyskytují v obou varietách anglického jazyka, ale jejich konotace či distribuce se liší, popřípadě mají v americké angličtině další význam. V tomto výzkumu vycházím z tvrzení v sekundární literatuře, které na materiálu korpusů ověřuji či vyvracuji. V tomto výzkumu porovnávám prvních deset výskytů deseti nejrelevantnějších substantivních kolokací vybraných adjektiv v BNC a COCA. Celkem bylo porovnáno devět

adjektiv: „cute“, „dumb“, „good“, „regular“, „clever“, „cheap“, „mad“, „neat“, cool“. U pěti z nich („good“, „regular“, „clever“, „cheap“, „cool“) byl zaznamenán posun k úzu popsanému pro americkou varietu. Ve zhodnocení metody byly shrnuty výsledky výzkumu s přihlédnutím k problémům, se kterými jsem se při výzkumu setkala.

V závěru jsou shrnuty výsledky obou výzkumů a nastíněna možnost dalšího výzkumu.

Appendices

1. Corpus-Driven Approach

- AmE Keywords
- BrE Keywords
- Keywords

2. Corpus-Based Approach

- Clever
- Cool
- Cute
- Dumb
- Good
- Cheap
- Mad
- Neat
- Regular